

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 502

By Jackson

A RESOLUTION to name Bon Aqua Woods State Natural Area in honor of environmentalist John Noel.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pay tribute to those citizens whose dedicated service to the environment and ecology of this State is tireless and unwavering; and

WHEREAS, Williamson County businessman and environmentalist John Noel is one such praiseworthy citizen whose determined advocacy for the environment of Middle Tennessee, and indeed that of the entire State, has ensured the preservation of a beautiful "old growth" white oak forest community in Hickman County known as Bon Aqua Woods; and

WHEREAS, an investment real estate agent by profession and a long-time environmentalist who truly loves nature, John Noel serves as President of the non-profit Southern Alliance for Clean Energy; and

WHEREAS, after a developer had purchased the Bon Aqua Woods site at auction, Mr. Noel rescued the 35-acre property from timber harvest and a future as a subdivision by purchasing the land from the developer for \$275,000 of his personal funds, with the ultimate goal of preserving this natural treasure for the enjoyment and edification of present and future generations; and

WHEREAS, after the property was appraised, the State of Tennessee determined that the massive old white oak forest, a cave system, and a nearby historic springs qualified Bon Aqua Woods for acquisition for use as a state natural area; and

WHEREAS, after financing through the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund and other state sources was finalized, the State of Tennessee purchased Bon Aqua Woods from Mr. Noel for \$225,000, with Mr. Noel generously making a gift of the difference between the purchase price and the sale price; and

WHEREAS, Bon Aqua Woods, scheduled to open this fall, will certainly be a valuable addition to the Department of Environment and Conservation's diverse system of state natural areas; and

WHEREAS, Bon Aqua Woods is home to numerous white oak trees that are 120-feet tall or taller, and many of these majestic trees are 100 years old or even older; the oldest tree there was probably already growing when the Pilgrims arrived in North America; and

WHEREAS, Bon Aqua Woods is an exceptionally large old growth forest for Middle Tennessee, and standing in the midst of it, one can experience the environment of an ancient forest untouched by civilization; and

WHEREAS, Bon Aqua Woods is also significant because umbrella magnolia, an uncommon species on the Western Highland Rim, grows in abundance in the understory; and

WHEREAS, the site's value is greatly enhanced by its accessibility to the public; the open land is not clogged, as many woods are, with invasive plant species that make it difficult to walk or see the forest floor; further, the green leafy canopy created by these massive oaks provides a favorable habitat for a legion of migratory songbirds; and

WHEREAS, John Noel has played an important role in the conservation and preservation of Tennessee's environment for many years, and he should be appropriately honored for his great foresight in purchasing and his great philanthropy in selling, at a personal loss, beautiful Bon Aqua Woods to the State of Tennessee for the benefit of his fellow citizens and their children and grandchildren; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that the approximately thirty-five (35) acres of land in Hickman County that has been designated a state natural area and described in Chapter 68 of the Public Acts of 2007 [codified at Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 11-14-108(b)(1)] as Bon Aqua Woods is hereby named in honor of John Noel of Williamson County, one of the most outstanding citizens and dedicated environmentalists this State has produced during its history.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commissioner of Environment and Conservation is directed to erect or affix suitable signs designating Bon Aqua Woods as the "John Noel State Natural Area".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of Environment and Conservation.